



\$2.95 #10

Nodwick™

*A World Without
Ziffany*

Part II



Nodwick

in:

A World Without Ziffany

Part II

"TRANSCRIPTION OF TRUTH-STONE SESSION,
HOUR TWO: THE HENCHMAN, NODWICK, HAD
TRAVELED TO A WORLD PARALLEL TO OUR OWN,
WHERE THE EVIL GOD, BAPHUMA'AL, RULED
WITH AN IRON FIST.

"TWO OF NODWICK'S FORMER EMPLOYERS, ARTAX
AND YEAGAR, WERE, IN THIS WORLD, POWERFUL
AND FEARSOME FOLLOWERS OF THE VILE GOD. NODWICK
FOUND HIMSELF ENSNARED IN A SCHEME TO DISRUPT
BAPHUMA'AL'S PLANS WITH THE AID OF A NEAR-
OMNISCIENT ARTAX. HE HAD SPENT THE BETTER
PART OF A WEEK GOING OVER THE LAYOUT OF
THE DARK CITADEL WHERE BAPHUMA'AL WAS
TO BEGIN THE DESTRUCTION OF POWERFUL
ARTIFACTS THAT MIGHT HALT HIS REIGN...

"STILL IN NODWICK'S POSSESSION WAS A
BOX OUR ORDER COMMANDED TO BE DROPPED INTO
THE CLEFT OF THE COSMOS (WHICH IS THE MEANS
BY WHICH THE HENCHMAN IN QUESTION WAS TRANS-
PORTED TO THE WORLD ADJACENT TO OURS). PROTECTED
FROM EVIL, THE BOX REMAINED UNDETECTED BY
PRACTICALLY EVERYONE NODWICK ENCOUNTERED...

"WE NOW
CONTINUE THE
INTERROGATION
CONCERNING EVENTS
LEADING UP TO THE
ATTEMPTED THEFT
OF ONE OF THE
APPARENTLY
DOOMED MAGICAL
ARTIFACTS..."



...AND TO THE WEST
OF THE GRAND HALL
OF PAIN?

THE BLOOD OF THE
INNOCENT CAUSEWAY...
PAST THAT IS THE...UM...
ANTECHAMBER OF FORGOTTEN
HORRORS REMEMBERED.

GOOD,
GOOD. AND
TO THE
EAST?

ER, THE
JUNCTION OF
DEFEAT AND
ORDER?

NO!
NO!
NO!

IT'S THE BARRACKS
OF THE FLESH RENDERERS!
YOU WOULD'VE BEEN
KILLED HAD YOU GONE
IN THERE!!

IT WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST TIME...
LOOK, I THINK I KNOW THIS PLACE WELL
ENOUGH. I JUST CAN'T GET THE NAMES
STRAIGHT, THAT'S ALL.

MODULE NO. 10
THE BLACK
CITADEL OF
BAPHUNIAAL

AND IF A LEGION-
NAIRE ASKS YOU YOUR BUSINESS
AND YOU MISTAKENLY CALL THE
HALL OF EVISCERATION THE
MARCH OF THE SEVERED HEADS?
WHAT THEN?!

WHO NAMED
ALL OF THESE
PLACES, ANYWAY?

WHO
DO YOU
THINK?

A WORSE QUESTION WOULD BE
WHY. SIGH... I SUPPOSE YOU'RE AS
READY AS YOU'LL EVER BE. TONIGHT, I'LL
GET YOU INTO THE CITADEL. AFTER
THAT, IT'S UP TO YOU.

HAPPINESS AND
GLEE. I'LL REHEARSE
THE CHANTS FOR THE
CEREMONY WHILE I
GET MY DISGUISE
READY...

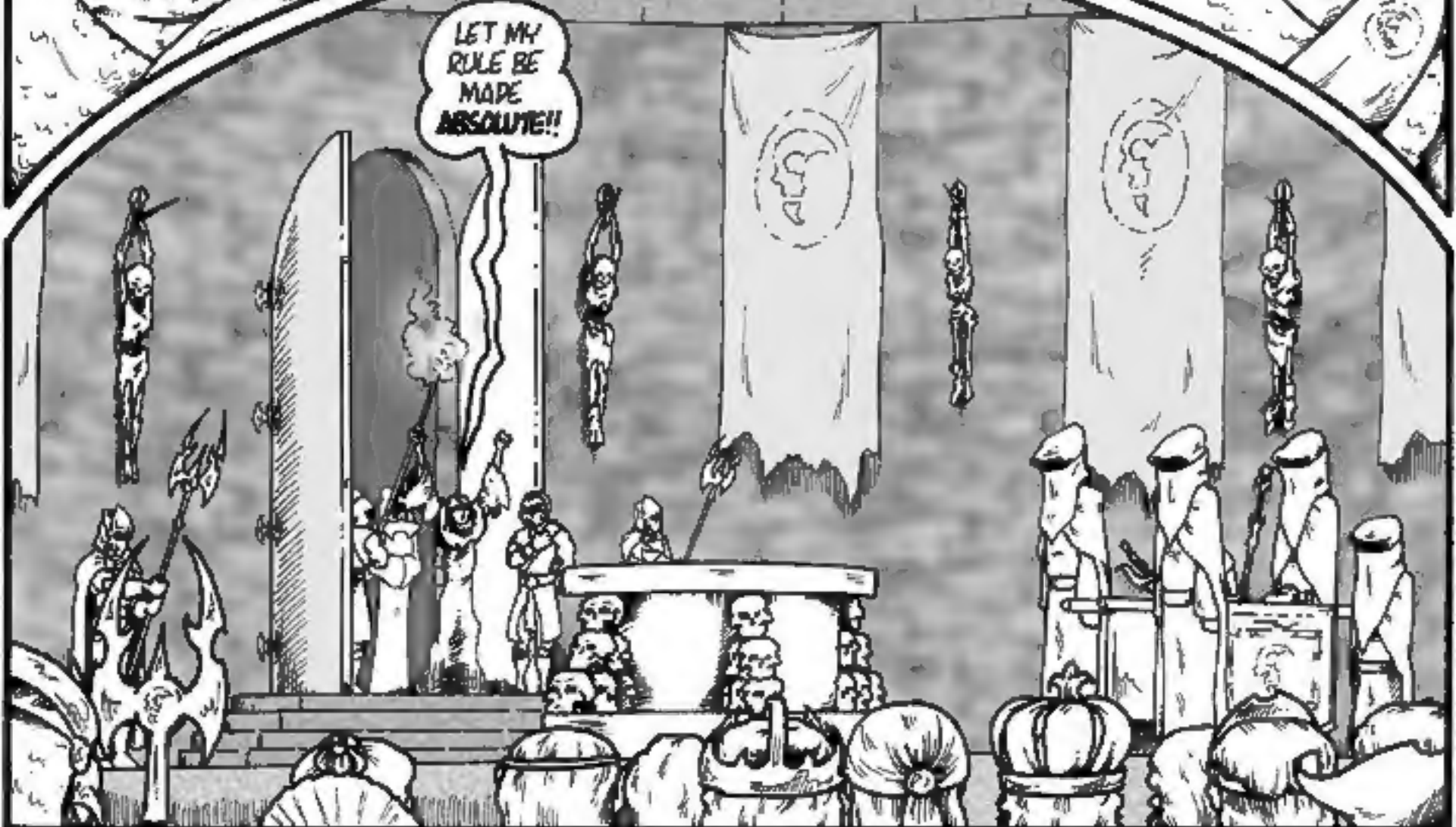
HOURS LATER, NIGHT ENVELOPS THE CITADEL...

...AND BAPHUMA'AL HIMSELF
WELCOMES THE DARKNESS...

ALL THE
YEARS OF CRUSHING
THIS WORLD... RAVAGING
THE LAND WITH MY
ARMIES OF HORROR...
IT ALL CULMINATES
IN TONIGHT'S FINAL
VICTORY.



LET MY
RULE BE
MADE
ABSOLUTE!!



BEHOLD, ALL OF YOU SO-CALLED "GODS" AND THOSE WHO PRAY TO THEM FOR DELIVERANCE! THIS WORLD IS NOW MINE...

...AND WHEN THESE PUNKY WEAPONS ARE NO MORE, MY POWER SHALL INCREASE AD INFINITUM...

...AND I SHALL REIGN FOREVER!

ALL HAIL BAPHUM'AL.
ALL HAIL BAPHUM'AL.
MAY HIS DARKNESS ETERNALLY CONSUME OUR SOULS, BOTH HERE AND IN THE HEREAFTER.

BEFORE I REDUCE ANOTHER GLIMMER OF HOPE TO ASH, I SUMMON ARTAX. SHOW YOURSELF!

YES, MY MASTER?

I WOULD KNOW WHAT FINAL TREACHERY YOU HAVE SET IN MOTION ON THIS NIGHT OF DESTINY.

I MAKE NO SECRET OF MY DISLIKE FOR YOUR RULE. I KNOW YOU ONLY SUFFER MY EXISTENCE BECAUSE I'M A WILLING CONDUIT FOR THE ORB OF OMNISCIENCE. IF YOU WANT TO DISCOVER WHAT I'VE PLANNED, TAKE IT FROM MY MIND AS YOU HAVE ALWAYS DONE.

POOF!

OH, I SHALL. I MERELY ASK OUT OF AMUSEMENT.

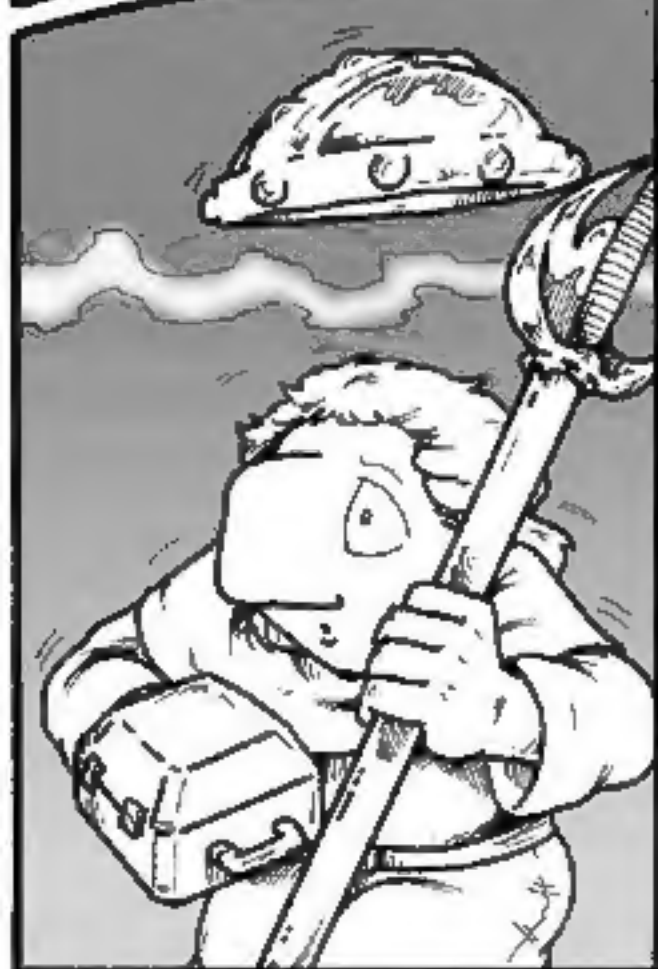
INTERESTING... YOU HAVE SENT SOMEONE TO STEAL ONE OF THE MAGIC WEAPONS... HE IS DISGUISED... AND IN THIS VERY ROOM! AH, YOU LEFT THE DETAILS UP TO HIM, EH? CLEVER OLD ARTAX! SADLY, YOU COULDN'T HELP KNOWING HE IS DRESSED AS ONE OF THE ARTIFACT BEARERS.

THEREFORE...

...THIS WOULD-BE THIEF IS GIVEN OVER TO DEATH!!

I SHALL MAKE AN UNDEAD SOLDIER FROM HIS BONES, AND HIS SOUL SHALL BE CAST-

ER, MY LORD?



DANG! I MISSED!! OH, WELL... C'N I GO BACK TO TH' "YOU GO, BAPHUM'AL" WORLD DOM'NASHUN PARTY NOW?

NO, YOU AND THE LESIONAIRES HOLD YOUR POSITION HERE. OUR THIEF'S RUN WILL END IN THE PORTALS OF BLOOD.

KILL ANYTHING THAT COMES BACK THIS WAY.

OUR HERO NEARS FREEDOM WHEN...

I BELIEVE YOU HAVE SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO ME.

WHOOPS! PERIL AHOY!

I'M NOT AN UNREASON-
ABLE DEITY. I'LL GIVE YOU SIXTY SECONDS
TO SURRENDER THE SWORD.

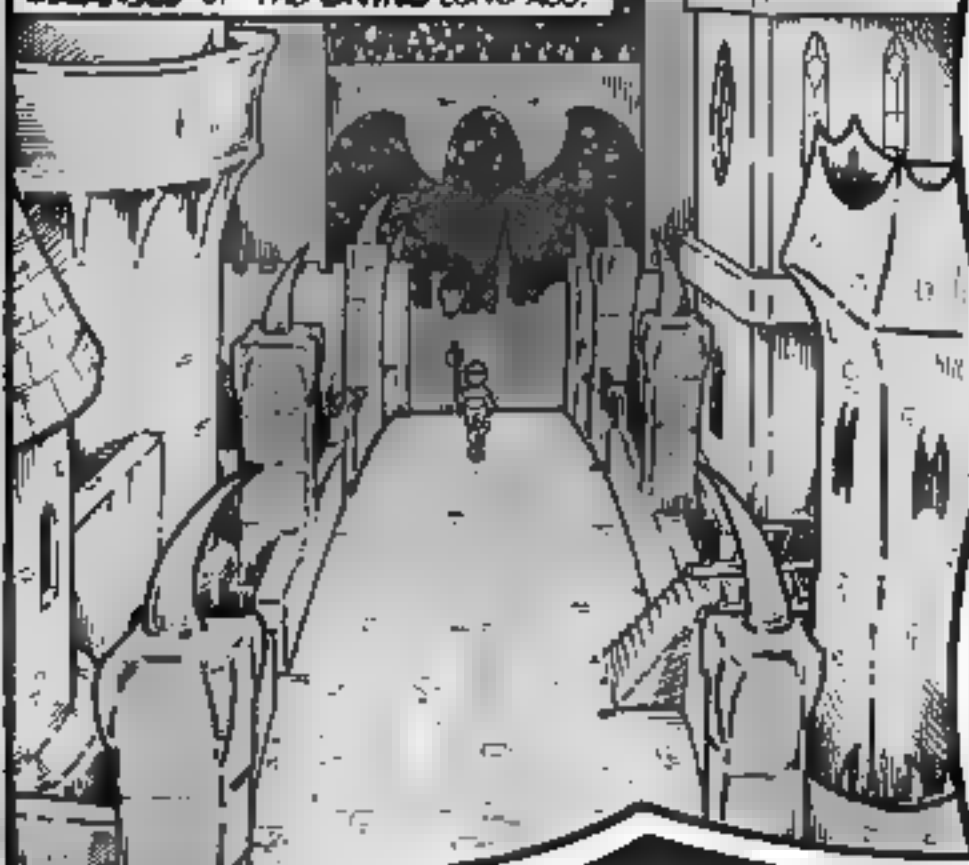
EACH SECOND THAT YOU ALLOW TO TICK AWAY
REPRESENTS ONE YEAR THAT YOU'LL SPEND IN UTTER
AGONY BEFORE I PERMIT YOU TO EXPIRE.
ONE... TWO... THREE...

HOW DID I GET ROPED
INTO THIS?! I CARRY
STUFF AS A CAREER!
WHEN DID MY JOB
DESCRIPTION INCLUDE
"BE TARGET FOR GODLY
WRATH?!" I MEAN...

BLEEP!
BLEEP!
BLEEP!



NODWICK MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE CITADEL, WHOSE STREETS WERE
CLEANSED OF THE LIVING LONG AGO.



MILES LATER...

WHEW! I
DIDN'T THINK I'D
MAKE IT THIS FAR!
ARTAX MUST'VE FOUND A
WAY TO KEEP BAPHUMAZL
IN THE DARK ABOUT
WHERE I AM.

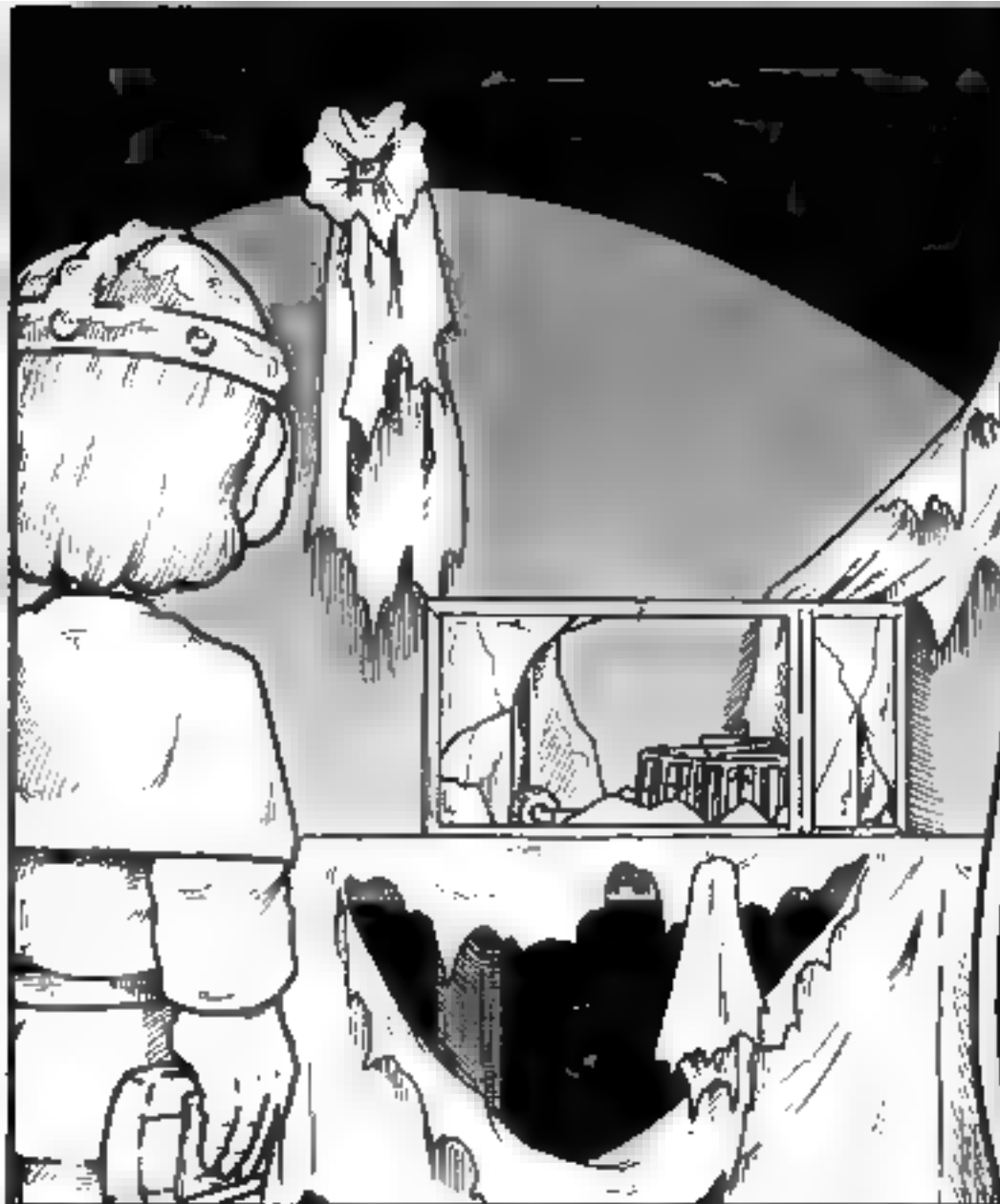
ARTAX SAID TO HEAD
SOUTH FROM THE RUINS
OUTSIDE OF THE CITADEL.
I GUESS THESE--



--ARE WHAT HE
WAS TALKING ABOUT...

OH MY...





PATHETIC, ISN'T IT? A UNION RUN BY A HAMSTER...

WHO...?!



SAH, YOU'RE ONE OF US, AREN'T YOU?

ER, ONE OF "US?"



A HENCHMAN, OF COURSE. 'CEPT YOU'RE ALIVE...

H-HEATHWICK? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!

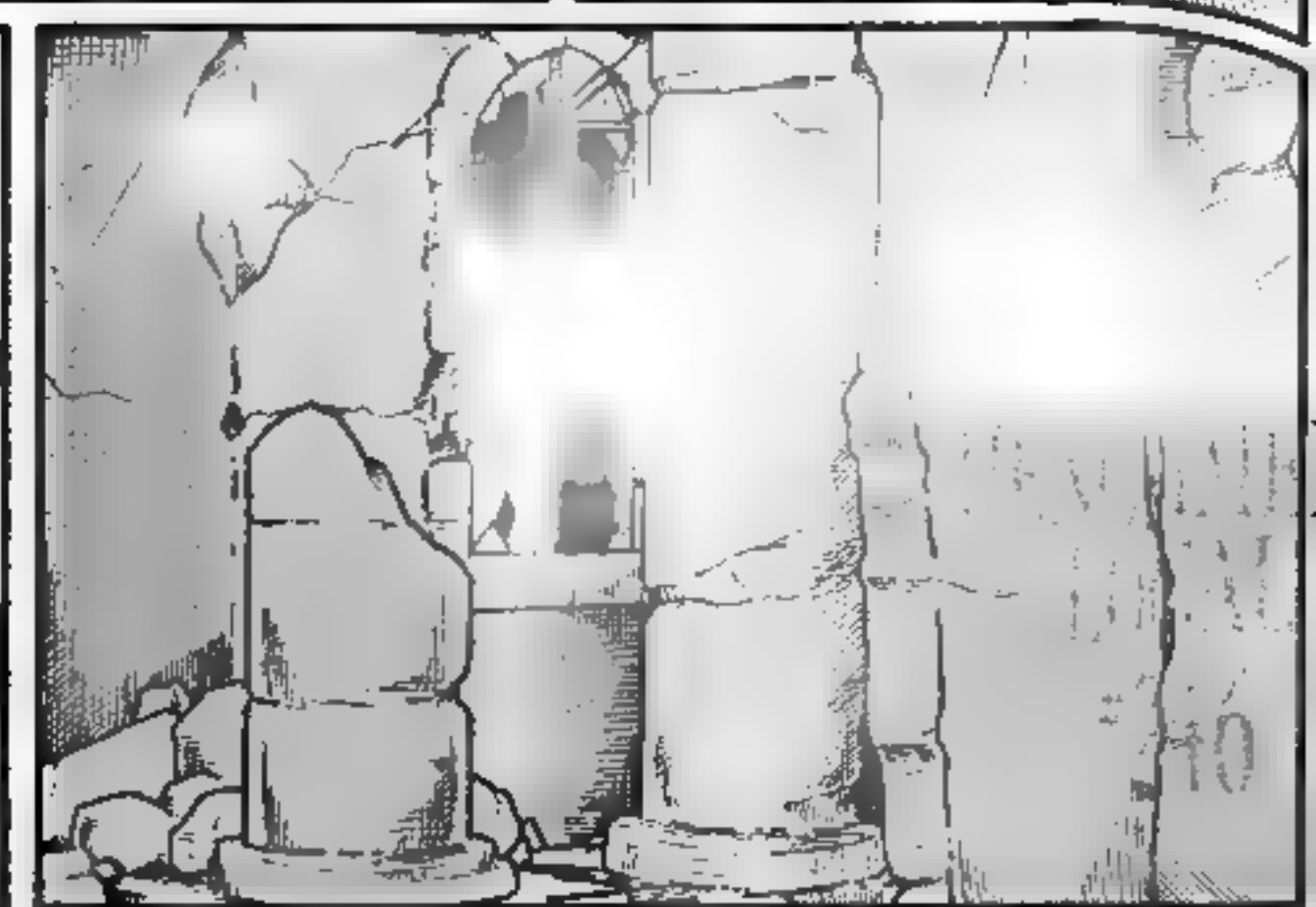


SAME THING THAT HAPPENED TO ALL OF US: BAPHUMAL TOOK OVER AND MADE US BUILD THAT CITADEL OF HIS. WHEN WE DROPPED FROM EXHAUSTION, HE JUST REANIMATED US AS UNDEAD. WHEN THE CITADEL WAS COMPLETED, HE EXILED US HERE.

WHO IS "US," EXACTLY?



EEPI!





I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS THING DID...

...BUT I'LL TAKE ANY CONFUSION I CAN GET TO HELP ME VAMOOSE!



THANK YOU...

BY THE GODS, THIS WORLD IS A NIGHTMARE! I DON'T THINK I'VE RUN INTO ANYONE WHOSE FIRST INCLINATION WASN'T "KILL THE-



“HENCHMAN” SIGH...

EET IZ NOT OFTEN ZAT WE GET ZE FUGATIVE FROM ZE CITADEL WEETH SUCH EENTERESTING BAGGAGE, NO?

TRUE, MASTER FRANSWA, BUT HE COULD BE PART OF A PLOT TO FINISH OFF THE RESISTANCE.



LATER, IN A HIDDEN CAMP NEAR THE RUINS...







ERE WE ARE!
ZE CLEFT OF ZE
COSMOS! WE WILL HAVE
YOU BACK HOME EEN
NO TIME!

HMM... ZE DARK
CLOUD ON ZE HORIZON
TELLS ME ZAT BAPHUMAAAL
EEZ COMING TO THANK YOU
FOR ZE TROUBLE YOU
GIVE HIM, MON AMI!

HURRY!
GET THE BANE-
BLADE THROUGH
THE CLEFT! IT'S
OUR ONLY
CHANCE!!

NO, I'M
GOING, BUT THE
BLADE IS STAYING
WITH YOU, FRANSUA!

ARE YOU MAD?! EET
EEZ ZE ONLY WAY TO STOP
ZE PROPHECIES!!

HOW? BY KEEPING
THINGS AS BAD AS THEY
ARE? SOONER OR LATER,
YOU'D BE TURNED INTO
SKELETON SOLDIERS
FOR THAT EVIL GOD.

THE PROPHECIES SAY THIS SWORD
COULD HELP TO STOP BAPHUMAAAL. IF YOU
AND THE RESISTANCE USE IT, YOU HAVE A CHANCE
AT FREEDOM! ISN'T THAT WORTH THE RISK?

HE EEZ HAVING A GOOD
POINT, MON AMI.

I'VE NEVER
SEEN A BETTER
SWORDSMAN THAN
YOU, MASTER
FRANSUA.

YOU'VE GOT A PART
TO PLAY, TOO. HERE. POKÉ
THE PICTURES ON THE TABLET
WHEN YOU NEED SOMETHING
COMPLETELY UNEXPECTED
TO HAPPEN.

ER,
THANKS.
I THINK...

ENOUGH TALK!
EENTO ZE CLEFT
WITH YOU!

I HOPE
THIS IS A
GOOD IDEA...

I HOPE BAPHUMIA'AL
WILL LIKE HEEZ FACE EEN
TWO PIECES! ALLONS-Y!

WITH THE THUNDER OF BAPHUMAZU'S RAGE SHAKING THE VERY STONES AROUND HIM, NODWICK LEAPT INTO THE CLEFT...



...AND DISCOVERED THE WAY HOME ISN'T ALWAYS A DIRECT ROUTE...

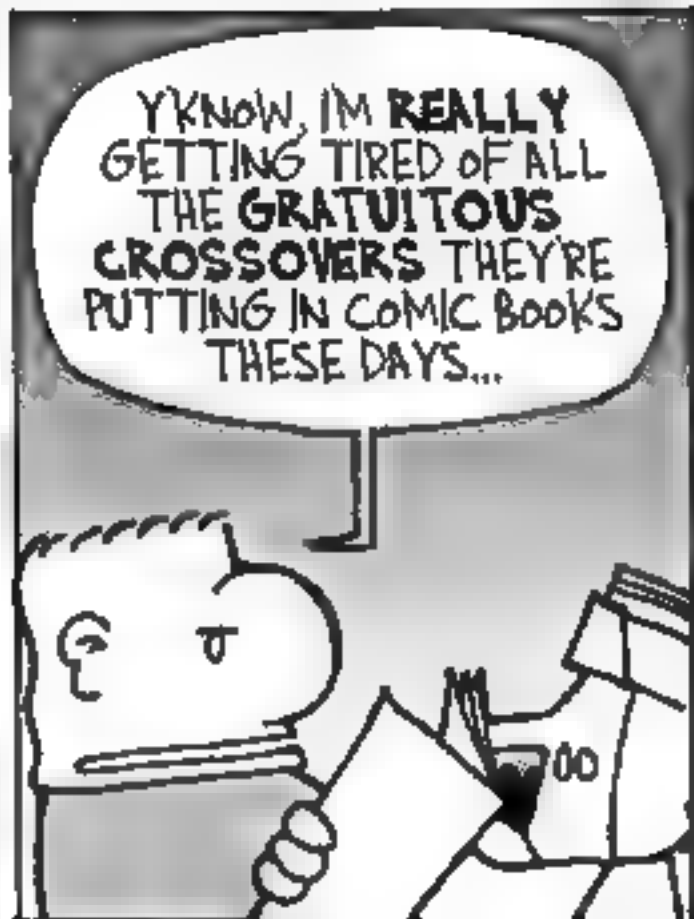


HI. COULD YOU BE A PAL AND JIGGLE THE HANDLE IN HERE FOR ME? I'M TRYING TO GET BACK TO MY HOME UNIVERSE.

MEN



YKNOU, I'M REALLY GETTING TIRED OF ALL THE GRATUITOUS CROSSOVERS THEY'RE PUTTING IN COMIC BOOKS THESE DAYS...



MEANWHILE, IN THE UNIVERSE WE ALL KNOW AND LOVE...

HERE'S THE PLAN: WE
BUST IN, GRAB PIFFANKI, AND
CELEBRATE OUR VICTORY BY
DOUBLING MY BAR TAB!

WHAT IF THEY TRY TO STOP US? I
DON'T THINK PIF WOULD GET A BUNDLE
OF KICKS OUT OF US TRYING TO PUNNEL HER
CO-WORKERS. BESIDES, THEY'VE PROBABLY GOT
QUITE A FEW "WORTH OF THE GODS" CLERICS
RUNNING AROUND IN THERE!



YOU SURE KNOW
HOW TO RUN A
GOOD PLAN?

NAMES?

HUH? OH.
ER, ARTAX AND
YEAGAR.

PURPOSE
OF VISIT?

UM... DARING
RESCUE?

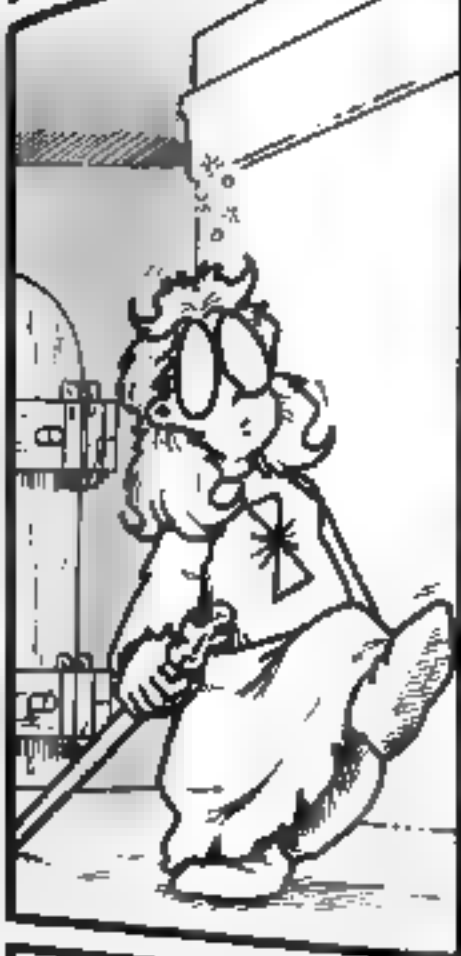
UH-HUH.
I'LL PUT YOU
DOWN FOR A TOUR
OF THE TEMPLE. WE
HAD A LOCAL PRE-
SCHOOL CANCEL ON
US, SO OUR TOUR
GUIDE HAS AN OPEN
SLOT. ENJOY
YOUR STAY!



...AND OVER THERE ARE THE BATTLEMENTS
WHICH STOOD FAST AGAINST THE ONSLAUGHT OF
ELVIR THE DARKSOUL, WHO WENT SO FAR AS TO
HURL WET CATS OVER THE WALLS IN AN
ATTEMPT TO BLAH-BLAH-BLAH...

WELL, WE'RE
IN, I GUESS...





THEN AGAIN, I COULD
BE COMPLETELY WRONG.



PIFFANY! IT'S GREAT
TO SEE YOU AGAI--



OH, IT'S AWFUL HERE! THEY GAVE ME
A CLASSROOM FULL OF THE MOST EVIL
CHILDREN TO BE INSTRUCTED IN THE
WAYS OF GOODNESS AND VIRTUE, BUT
THEY JUST CAN'T BE REFORMED! THEY
BITE, THEY SCRATCH, THEY MAKE VILE
INCANTATIONS, THEY SUMMON BEASTS
FROM THE DARKEST PLANES AND THEY'RE SO
ICKY-BAD NASTY THAT I JUST WANNA SCREAM
NOT-NICE WORDS AND STUFF!! WHAT'S
WORSE, IF THEY DON'T IMPROVE SOON, I'LL
PROBABLY WASH OUT OF MY CLERICAL ORDER!



THIS SOUNDS
LIKE SOMETHING
WE CAN
HANDLE.

WHERE DO
YOU KEEP
THE LITTLE
TYKES?



SOON...

HEY! THEY LOOK
LIKE THE CROWD I
RAN WITH WHEN I
WAS A KID!

JUST HANG
LOOSE, PIFFANY.
WE'LL TAKE CARE
OF THIS, NO
PROBLEM.





AND DO IT, HE DID...

THIS ENDS THE LONGEST RECORDED EXPOSURE OF A MORTAL BEING TO THE POWER OF THE TRUTH STONE. I HEREBY HUMBLY SUBMIT THIS REPORT TO THE COUNCIL OF HEIROPHANTS. LET THE GODS GUIDE THEIR DECISIONS IN THIS MATTER, FOR IT DOES INDEED APPEAR THAT DARK TIMES LIE AHEAD.



SO, NOW WHAT?

WELL, AFTER THE TRUTH STONE REVEALS WHAT NODWICK SAW, THE COUNCIL OF HEIROPHANTS WILL DECIDE WHAT TO DO.

I'M WORRIED ABOUT NODWICK, THOUGH. THE TRUTH STONE WASN'T MADE FOR THINGS LIKE THIS, REALLY. IT WAS MORE TO FIND OUT IF SOMEONE HAD DONE SOMETHING VERY NAUGHTY OR NOT, AND EVEN THEN IN ONLY THE MOST EXTREME CASES. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HOURS OF BEING UNDER IT WILL--

CLICK!



NODWICK! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR--

POOF!

OH, DEAR...

I'LL FIND A BROOM.





SISTER PIFFANY, AFTER CAREFUL REVIEW OF YOUR HENCHMAN'S EXPERIENCES, I SAW MERIT IN LETTING YOU RETURN TO YOUR ADVENTURING WORK.

WHAT CONVINCED ME WAS SEEING YOUR RESULTS WITH THE CHILDREN.

DO WHA-HUH?



IT WAS A PLEASURE BEING YOUR STUDENT, MISS PIFFANY! I DO HOPE TO HAVE YOU OVER FOR BRUNCH SOMEDAY.

I PAINTED A PICTURE OF A PUPPY CHASING A BUTTERFLY. IT'S FOR YOU! I HOPE YOU LIKE IT!



WHAT DID YOU DO TO THEM?

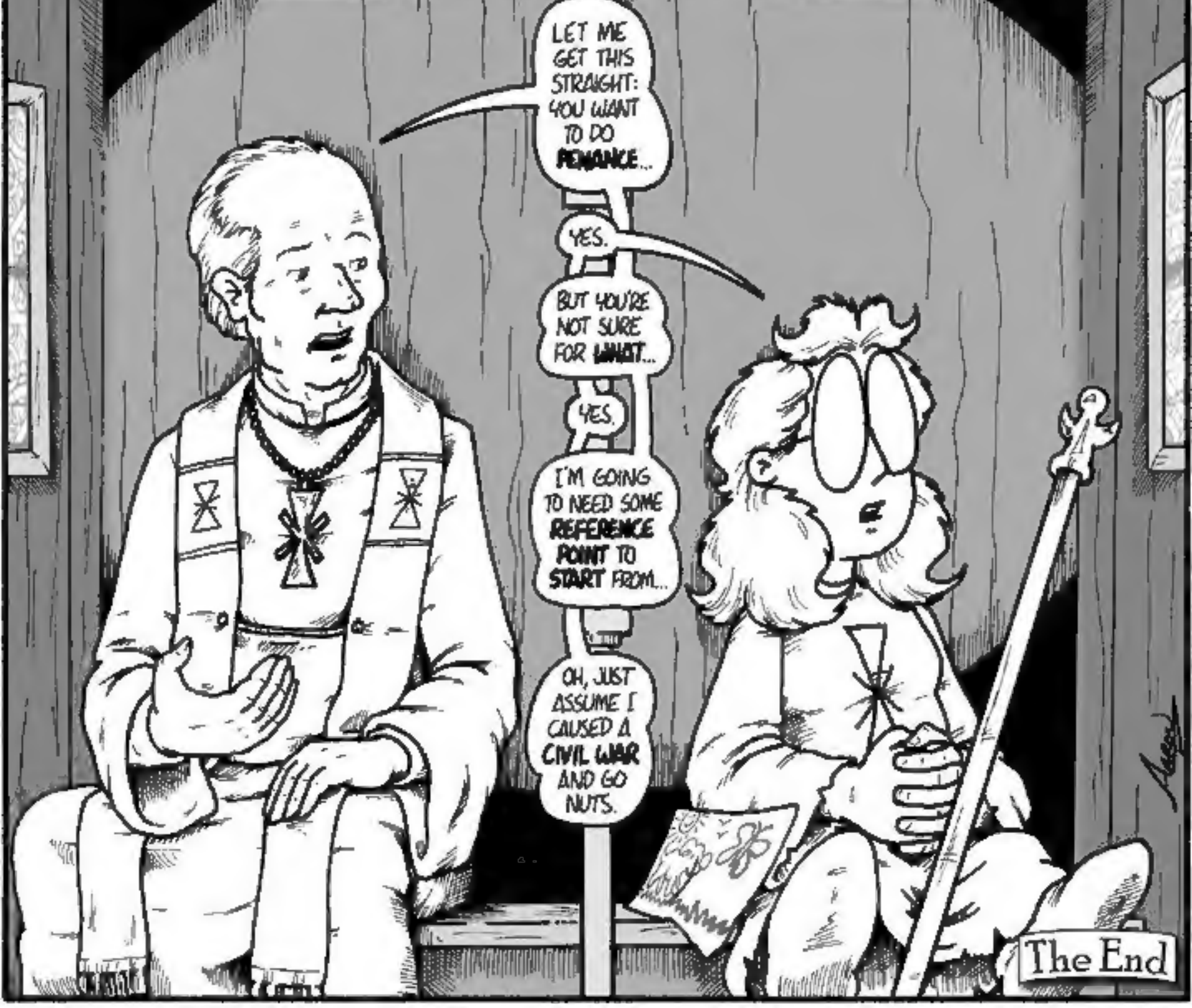
WE JUST EXPLAINED HOW GOOD BEHAVIOR WORKS.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

BASICALLY, IF YOU ACT LIKE A WELL-BEHAVED, GOOD-NATURED PERSON, IT OFTEN LETS YOU GET INTO A POSITION WHERE YOU GET MORE BANGS FOR YOUR BUCK IF YOU DO SOMETHING BAD.

SO WE CONVINCED THEM THAT IF THEY PUT THE EVIL STUFF ON HOLD UNTIL A REALLY GREAT OPPORTUNITY CAME UP, THEY'D GET TO GRADUATE, YOU'D GET YOUR OLD JOB BACK, AND WE'D GET TO WORK WITH OUR FAVORITE CLERIC AGAIN! IT'S A WIN-WIN-WIN SITUATION!





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